

NSC BRIEFING

9 March 1955

THE ABDICATED CAMBODIAN KING

- I. Big questions are: Why did he abdicate? What will he do next?
- A. Immediate reason was criticism of his antidemocratic proposals for constitutional change.
 - B. King deeply convinced he has public pulse. He is ~~impulsive~~ ^{MERCURIAL} and ultrasensitive to criticism.
 - C. Also has sense of showmanship and capability to pick right moment for execution of well-laid plans.
 - D. Immediate cause--or pretext--for abdication was resentment over British criticism of his constitutional proposals.

E. But king may have wanted to prove that he didn't need throne to be a political heavyweight.

1. During past two years he has acquired liking for politics.
2. Also has messianic bent; may see himself like Gautama Buddha, forsaking princely inheritance for a cause.
3. King's "cause" would be defense of people against politicians.

II. Ex-king still regards himself as ultimate authority in Cambodia.

A. Took charge of military ceremony at which his parents, current king and queen, were

B. Told Amb. McClintock "he had arranged" to speed up negotiations for American aid.

C. McClintock foreshadows him continuing in role of a "shogun."

III. Ex-king retains wide freedom of action.

A. He can build a political party.

B. He can rule through his parents.

C. He can regain the throne.